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The Planet Mercury.

Mercury is one of the smallest of the planets. It is perhaps the most troublesome to the astronomer. It lies so close to the sun that it is seen but seldom in comparison with the other great planets. Its orbit is very eccentric and it experiences disturbances by the attraction of other bodies in a way not yet fully understood. A special difficulty has also been found in the attempt to place Mercury in the weighing scales. We can weigh the sun, the moon and even Jupiter and other planets, but Mercury presents difficulties of a peculiar character. An attempt, however, succeeded in devising a method of weighing it.

It is demonstrated that our earth is attracted by this planet, and he showed how the amount of attraction may be determined by observations of the sun. He then made an examination of the observations he made an approximate determination of the mass of Mercury. His Venusian result indicated that the weight of the planet was about the fifteenth part of the weight of the earth. In other words, if our earth was placed in a balance and fifteen globes, each equal to Mercury, were laid in the other the scales would hang evenly.—"Stars of the Heavens."

When Her Turn Came.

The Journal had taken on a "woman editor." Her duty was to look after the "woman's page." Space being scarce in the "local room," a desk was given her in the managing editor's room, directly adjoining. For a week or two no fault was found with her work, but one morning the managing editor said to her:

"Miss Penfield, your style of writing is a little too terse and epigrammatic for the needs of your department. You must study expansion."

"Very well, Mr. Ringgold," she answered. "I will try."

Thereafter her work appeared to give entire satisfaction, for there was no further criticism. About six months later, however, the managing editor after a morning spent in working at his desk suddenly wheeled in his chair and said:

"Miss Penfield, I want a wife. I want you. Will you marry me?"

"Mr. Ringgold," she responded, with a mocking smile, "that is rather terse and epigrammatic. Don't you think you ought to study expansion a little?"—Youth's Companion.

A Word of Warning.

"You never proposed to her on your knees," cried the veteran married man in dismay.

"Sure I did; sure," the youth repeated, a glad, proud light shining in his eyes.

"Well," said the veteran, "you'll regret it about twice a week for the rest of your life. After you get married the slightest argument, the first impatient word, will cause your wife to say, 'You weren't like this when you went down on your knees and begged me, with tears in your eyes, to marry you.'"

"It's pretty bad to have an angry wife read out your old love letters reproachfully," said the veteran, "but that is nothing to being reminded of your kneeling proposal every week till you are a great-grandfather."

"You proposed on your knees your self?" the youth hazarded.

But the veteran frowned and made no reply.—Los Angeles Times.

The Seven Wise Men of Greece.

The seven wise men of Greece were Thales of Miletus, Periander of Corinth, Cleobulus of Lydus, Chilon of Lacedaemon, Solon of Athens, Bias of Prienne and Pittacus of Mitylene. Some fishermen of Miletus sold a draft of fishes to a bystander. When the net was drawn in it contained a golden tripod, and the purchaser claimed it was his, while the fishermen contended that they sold only the fish that might be in the net. The dispute was referred to the oracle of Delphi, who awarded the tripod to the wisest man in Greece. Thereupon it was taken to Thales, who declined it and suggested that it be given to Bias. He in turn refused to accept it, and thus it was successively declined by all the seven, and they were thereafter known as the seven wise men of Greece.

The Number 4.

There are four cardinal points, four winds, four quarters of the moon, four seasons, four rules of arithmetic, four suits of cards, four quarters to the hour, four legs for furniture, most animals go on four legs, the dead are placed between four planks, the prisoners between four walls. We have four incisors and four canine teeth, and our forks have four prongs. All animals when butchered are cut into four quarters. The violin, greatest of all string instruments, has but four strings. Four of a kind is a pretty good hand at poker, even if they are only fours.—Exchange.

Dressed For the Part.

"What subject have you taken for your address at the Civic club?"

"Woman's moral obligations as a citizen."

"What a lovely subject! And what are you going to wear?"

"That new gown I brought home with me from Paris. And just think! I had it so cleverly packed in with my old clothes that the customs house inspector never discovered it was there."—Baltimore American.

An Explanation.

"How in blazes did the compositor happen to head my foreign travel letter with the words 'Foreign Drivelly'?"

"I don't know. Perhaps he read it."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Sponges are great germ collectors. They should be scalded out thoroughly every little while.

MATHEMATICAL SIGNS.

Origin of Plus, Minus, Multiplication and Division Symbols.

The sign of addition is derived from the initial letter of the word "plus." In making the capital letter it was made more and more carefully until the top part of the "p" was finally placed near the center; hence the plus sign as we know it was gradually reached.

The sign of subtraction was derived from the word "minus." The word was first contracted in m. n. s., with a horizontal line above to indicate that some of the letters had been left out. At last the letters were omitted altogether, leaving only the short line.

The multiplication sign was obtained by changing the plus sign into the letter "x." This was done because multiplication is but a shorter form of addition.

Division was formerly indicated by placing the dividend above a horizontal line and the divisor below. In order to save space in printing, the dividend was placed to the left and the divisor to the right. After years of "evolution" the two "d's" were omitted altogether and simple dots set in the place of each. As with the others, the radical sign was derived from the initial letter of the word "radix."

The sign of equality was first used in the year 1557 by a sharp mathematician, who substituted it to avoid frequently repeating the words "equal to."—St. James' Gazette.

UNCLE SAM.

The Way Our Nickname is Said to Have Originated.

This familiar nickname for the United States is said to have come about in the following manner:

During the war of 1812 the United States government entered into a contract with Elbert Anderson to furnish supplies to the army. Whenever the United States buys anything from a contractor it appoints an inspector to see that the goods are up to the specifications. In this case the government appointed a man by the name of Samuel Wilson. He was a jolly, whole souled man and was familiarly known as Uncle Sam.

It was his duty to inspect every box and cask that came from Elbert Anderson, the contractor, and if the contents were all right the cargo was marked with the letters "E. A.—U. S." the initials of the contractor and of the United States.

The man whose duty it was to do this marking was something of a joker, and when somebody asked him one day what these letters stood for he said that they meant Elbert Anderson and Uncle Sam.

Everybody, including Uncle Sam himself, thought this a very good joke, and by and by it got into print, and before the end of the war it was known all over the country, and that is how the United States received the name of Uncle Sam.—Des Moines Register and Leader.

Worshipping a Turtle.

At a place called Kotron, on the French Ivory Coast, the natives believe that to eat or destroy a turtle would mean death to the guilty one or sickness among the family. The fetish men, of which there are plenty, declare that years ago a man went to sea fishing. In the night his canoe was thrown upon the beach empty. Three days afterward a turtle came ashore at the same place with the man on its back alive and well. Since that time they have never eaten or destroyed one of that species, although they enjoy other species.

If one happens now to be washed ashore there is a great commotion in the town. First the women sit down and start singing and beating sticks; next a small piece of white cloth (color must be white) is placed on the turtle's back. Food is then prepared and placed on the cloth, generally plantains, rice and palm oil. Then, amid a lot more singing, dancing and antics of the fetish people, it is carried back into the sea and goes on its way rejoicing.

Too Much Expense.

"Yes," said Mr. Tyte-Phist, "I was just stepping on the car when the conductor gave the motorman the signal to go ahead, and the car started. My foot went out from under me, and I sat down on the muddy crossing, ruining a twenty-two dollar suit of clothes."

"Then you sat there, swore like a trooper and gnashed your teeth in rage, I suppose," remarked the sympathizing listener.

"No," said Mr. Tyte-Phist. "I may have sworn a little, but I didn't do any gnashing. My teeth are new and cost me \$30."—Chicago Tribune.

Waked Them Up.

Dr. Hans Richter, the famous conductor, while supervising a rehearsal in a London theater once was much annoyed at the calm way the players were taking the impassioned music.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said he, suddenly stopping short, "you're all playing like married men, not like lovers."—Westminster Gazette.

Not His Fault.

Howell—A good deal depends on the formation of early habits. Powell—I know it. When I was a baby my mother hired a woman to wheel me about, and I have been pushed for money ever since.—London Mail.

On Time.

"Does he ever do anything on time?"

"Oh, yes. He quits work."—Detroit Free Press.

When you sell an article by weight, remember that other people have scales.—Atchison Globe.

A Tiger in Wales.

Some years ago it was reported that a tiger had escaped from a traveling menagerie at Brecon, in Wales. Mangled sheep were said to mark its course across country to Llandudoch Wells, some farmers lost their dogs and on market days at South Brecon, Fearbent and Llanmarnach the wild beast was the center of rumor. Country schools were closed because parents feared to let their children go along the roads, and bands of armed men sought to hunt the tiger down.

This state of terror lasted a week, though no person was found who had actually seen the tiger, but only people who "had heard that some one else," and so forth. Then the truth was hunted down and the origin of the whole affair discovered at the remote hamlet of Eberedw. One night the schoolmaster there, in dismissing the children, playfully had warned them not to loiter in going home lest a tiger should get them.

The scared children accepted the warning as real and hastened home with stories of a savage beast lurking behind hedges or growing in ravines. And so the story grew, as stories do under the culture of imagination.

As Clear as Crystal.

An English firm whose shipment of goods was delayed in reaching Japan received the following communication from its newly appointed Japanese agent: "With regard to the matter of escaping the penalty for nondelivery of this—there is only one way to creep round same—by diplomat. We must make a stir or strike occurring in our factory. Of course big untrue. I place my presence on inclosed form of letter and believe this will avoid the trouble of penalty of same. As Mr. — is most religious and competent man, also heavily upright and godly, it fears me that useless to apply for his signature. Please therefore attach same at Yokohama office, making force. But no cause for fear of prison happenings, as this often happens by merchants of high integrity. But if this involves that your honor look mean and excessive awkward for business purpose, I think more better a little serpentine wisdom of polite manhood and thus found good business edifice." The firm knows as much now about the delay as it did before.

Not Complete.

"Sir," says the sleek looking agent, approaching the desk of the meek, meaching looking man and opening one of those folding thingumajigs abounding styles of binding, "I believe I can interest you in this massive set of books containing the speeches of the world's great orators. Seventy volumes, \$1 down and \$1 a month until the price, \$800, has been paid. This set of books gives you the most celebrated speeches of the greatest talkers the world has ever known, and—"

"Let me see the index," says the meek man. The agent hands it to him, and he looks through it carefully and methodically, running his finger along the list of names. Reaching the end, he hands the index back to the agent and says:

"It isn't what you claim it is. I happen to know the greatest talker in the world, and you haven't her in the index."—Chicago Post.

The Turtle's Cunning.

Although not credited with any high degree of intelligence, the turtle when about to deposit its eggs exhibits considerable cunning. It scoops out a hole, as if to prepare a repository for its eggs, but in order to delude the birds and other enemies the turtle throws the sand again into the hole, leaving the surface rough, and waddles off to another spot, where it repeats the process. Sometimes this is done three times, and eventually the eggs are laid in an excavation within a few yards of the sham nest, the surface being smoothed and flattened down. When hunting for the eggs the Queensland blacks probe the sand in the vicinity of one of the sham nests and are usually successful.—London Globe.

When the Dog Was Dressed.

"Oh, mamma," said little Jacky, running into the house, "our dog Tige is dressed awful funny!"

Mamma looked out of the window. "Why, there is Tige," she replied, "and he's not dressed at all. How could a dog be dressed?"

Jack's eyes sparkled. "I wanted you to ask me that," he told her, "because I wanted to tell you that a dog is dressed after he's been running—when he wears a collar and pants."

Cause For Tears.

"What's the matter, dear?" queried the mother of five-year-old Helen, who was crying as if her little heart would break. "What are you crying about?"

"I w-want s-somethin'," sobbed Helen.

"What do you want?" asked her mother.

"I've forgot what I w-want," answered the little miss. "Th-that's what m-makes me c-cry."—Chicago News.

Overwhelmed.

"Your pulchritude is peerless. You are an astounding aggregation of feminine faultlessness. Be mine!"

"Sure," responded the girl. "I never could resist that press agent language."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Might Have Been Much Worse.

"You admit that the audience howled and whistled through the whole three acts of your play, and you say it might have been worse. How could it?"

"There might have been five acts."—Exchange.

He who thinks he has little to learn learns little and teaches less.

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